

small species of Bittern, only seven inches in height, and probably the "Little Bittern" of Mr. Ellman (Zool. p. 7469), has been discovered on the west coast of the South Island; the remarks of Mr. Mackay (Ibis, 1867, pp. 144, 145) on *Notornis mantelli* are said to refer to *Strigops habroptilus*, though it must be mentioned here that that gentleman positively assured us he knew both birds well; a new species of *Ocydromus* from the south-west coast of the South Island is described under the name of *O. nigricans*; the so-called *Mimus carunculatus* (cf. Ibis, 1867, p. 132), subsequently called by Dr. Finsch (J. F. O. 1867, pp. 342, 343) *Anthochara bulleri*, is said to be identical with *A. carunculata*; *Creadion carunculatus* and *C. cinereus* are stated to be totally distinct; and, finally, *Spheniscus undinus* has been procured on the west coast of the province of Wellington. Appended to this paper is a careful translation of Dr. Finsch's review, which appeared in the 'Journal für Ornithologie' for 1867 (pp. 305-347), and further on in the volume is a reprint of Mr. Buller's original 'Essay.' Captain Hutton contributes two lists of the birds of the Great and Little Barrier-Islands, on the latter of which he observed a species of nocturnal habit, but, not being able to obtain an example, he cannot even conjecture what kind of bird it was. Several communications by various other authors treat more or less incidentally of the species of *Dinornis*, and especially of the period at which they existed, concerning which much doubt seems to prevail among those persons in the colony best fitted to form an opinion. Altogether it is most satisfactory to find that, amid the distractions of war, our fellow subjects in New Zealand have time to devote to science.

IX.—Letters, Announcements, &c.

WE have received the following letters, addressed to "To the Editor of 'The Ibis'":—

Agra, June 6*, 1869.

SIR,—'The Ibis,' for April has just come to hand, and it contains several passages in regard to which I wish to offer some remarks.

* [This letter did not reach us until after that of the 12th of the same month, which was printed in our last number.—ED.]

1st. I notice what Dr. Von Heuglin says (Ibis, 1869, p. 133) about the nidification of *Cisticola schænicola*. Pässler appears to me to be very correct in his account. In Upper India, at any rate, this species almost invariably builds "a nest so peculiar that it cannot be confounded with any other." I have myself taken, or seen after they had been taken by my friends Messrs. Brooks, Blewitt, and others, fully fifty nests, and all were, with one exception, of the same type. The bird, which breeds in the rainy season (commonly in August), selects a patch of dense, fine-stemmed grass, from 18 inches to 2 feet in height, and, as a rule, standing in a moist place; in this, at the height of from 6 to 8 inches from the ground, the nest is constructed, the sides of which are formed by the blades and stems of the grass, *in situ*, closely tacked and caught together with cobwebs and very fine silky vegetable fibre. This is done for a length of from 2 to nearly 3 inches, and, as it were, a narrow tube, from 1 to 1·5 inch in diameter, formed in the grass. To this a bottom, as before mentioned, from 4 to 6 inches above the surface of the ground, is added, a few of the blades of the grass being bent across, tacked and woven together with cobwebs and fine vegetable fibre. The whole interior is then closely felted with the silky down of the *Murdar* (*Palotropis hamiltoni*). The nest thus constructed forms a deep and narrow purse, about 3 inches in depth, 1 inch in diameter at top, and 1·5 inch at the broadest part below. The tacking together of the stems of the grass is commonly continued a good deal higher up on one side than on the other; and it is through or between the untacked stems opposite to this that the tiny entrance exists. Of course, above the nest the stems and blades of the grass meeting together completely hide it. The dimensions above given are those of the interior of the nest. Its exterior dimensions cannot be given. The bird tacks together not merely the few stems absolutely necessary to form a side to the nest, but most of the stems all round, decreasing the extent of attachment as they recede from the nest-cavity. It does this, too, very irregularly; on one side of the nest, perhaps, no stem more than an inch distant from the interior surface of the nest will be found in any way bound up in the fabric, while on the opposite side, per-

haps, stems fully 3 inches distant, together with all the intermediate ones, will be found more or less webbed together.

Once only did I find a nest of a different type. This was built amongst the stems of a common prickly labiate marsh-plant which has white and mauve flowers. There was a straggling framework of fine grass, firmly netted together with cob-webs, and a very scanty lining of down.

The nest was egg-shaped, and the aperture on one side near the top. Mr. Brooks, I believe, once obtained a similar one; but all the others, that any of us have ever got, have been of the type first described, which corresponds closely, it seems to me, with Pässler's account. As regards the eggs, all that we get in India belong to one and the same type, which type differs from any of those that Dr. Bree, following Moquin-Tandon, figures. His examples are all perfectly spotless eggs, one pink, another bluish-white, and a third a pretty dark bluish-green. Our eggs, on the contrary, are white, with, when fresh and unblown, a delicate pink hue, due not to the shell itself, but to its contents, which partially shew through it. *Every egg is spotted* (commonly most thickly towards the large end) with, as a rule, exceedingly minute red, reddish-purple, and pale purple specks, thus resembling, though smaller, more glossy, and far less thickly speckled, the eggs of *Franklinia buchanaui*.

These are beyond all question the eggs of our Indian species, and the only type that I have yet met with here; the question of course remains, whether our Indian *Prinia cursitans* (Frankl.) is really identical with the European *C. schænicola* (Bp.). For my part, I believe it to be so; and the apparent extraordinary variability of the eggs in different parts of the world affords ground for serious consideration. The eggs that I have seen were found at different points of a tract of country measuring some six hundred miles from east to west, and three hundred from north to south; but throughout this tract only the one type that I have above described appears to prevail.

Of course even our eggs vary somewhat. Of one nest I wrote at the time I found it:—"The eggs are rather short ovals, slightly pointed at one end, with a white ground, thickly

sprinkled with numerous specks and tiny spots of pale brownish-red; they measured $\cdot 58$ by $\cdot 46$ in."

Of another set of eggs I wrote:—"The ground had a faint pearly tinge, and there was a well-marked, though irregular and ill-defined, zone towards the large end, formed by the agglomeration there of multitudinous specks, which in places were almost confluent."

Of a third set:—"The eggs were much glossier, and had a China-white ground; but instead of a multitude of small specks over the whole surface, they had nearly the whole colouring-matter gathered together at the large end in a cap of bold, almost maroon, red spots, only a very few specks of the same colour being scattered over the rest of the egg."

The eggs of this species measure from $\cdot 53$ to $\cdot 62$ in. in length, and from $\cdot 45$ to $\cdot 48$ in. in breadth; but the average dimensions of a large number measured were $\cdot 59$ by $\cdot 46$ in.

Walking through patches of grass one often disturbs a pair of these little birds, chiefly during the hot weather and the rainy season. The male rises in the air by jerks, each flap of his wings raising him two or three feet; and every flap is accompanied by his feeble song, which consists of a single note. When he has mounted fifty or sixty yards, his little song ceases, and he comes down with a rapid circular rush, to start again on his upward course, singing all the time. He seldom leaves the female for any length of time; and when she is disturbed and flies a short distance dropping suddenly into the grass, he flies above her, hovers for an instant to see that she is all right, and then soars again. After a time he gets tired of singing and of his upward jerking flight, and drops suddenly down into the grass, out of which it is no easy job to drive him before he has had a good rest. The rate at which this tiny bird soars up is really surprising. He mounts more quickly, I think, than any soaring Lark.

2nd. The eggs brought to Capt. Bulger (Ibis, 1869, p. 161) as those of *Eumyias melanops*, certainly never belonged to that bird, whose eggs I proceed to describe:—

In shape they are moderately broad ovals, somewhat compressed towards the smaller end. The ground-colour is

pinky-white, in some entirely devoid of markings, in others with a more or less conspicuous reddish-pink zone or cap of mottled or clouded speckly markings, generally nearly confluent. They have little or no gloss, and obviously belong to the same type as those of *Niltava*. The want of distinctness in the markings separates them from those of *Tchitreia paradisi*, *Dicrurus macrocerus*, and the like. The colouring is a clouded zone or cap, at the best, never defined specks or spots. They vary in length from .75 to .85 in., and in breadth from .57 to .62 in.; but the average of ten measured was .77 by .58 in. I have taken these eggs myself near Simla, and have them from Darjeeling, Almorah, Missourie, and Dhurumsala, so that there is no mistake about the matter.

I may mention that the eggs of *Eumyias albicaudata* do not differ widely from those of the preceding species; they average perhaps somewhat smaller, and are darker and more uniform in colour, being of a dingy buff, more or less mottled throughout (but excessively faintly) with a dusky shade, and clouded with a somewhat deeper shade of the ground-colour at the larger end. They closely resemble the eggs of *Niltava sundara*, but are smaller and paler. As usual in this family, they are dull and glossless.

3rd. Captain Bulger mentions that he procured *Chelidorrhynx hypoxantha* on Mount Tongloo. Dr. Jerdon seems to fancy that this is a rare species; in reality it is common in the Turai, the forests of Gurhwab, the Dhoon, warm valleys in the neighbourhood of Missourie, and near Simla, probably, in fact, throughout the sub-Himalayan region, at least as far west as Simla.

4th. Lord Walden is undoubtedly correct in stating (Ibis, 1869, p. 211) that Dr. Stoliczka's *Munia similaris* is the young of *M. undulata*. I pointed this out to Dr. Stoliczka directly I received a copy of his paper. I have specimens of the young with one or two new feathers at one or the other side of the breast assuming the bars of the adult plumage.

I also agree with Lord Walden (*tom.cit.* p. 212) that the doubtful *Hydrobata* is one form of the young of *H. asiatica*. I have a bird answering precisely to Dr. Stoliczka's descrip-

tion, and a complete series, connecting this with the fully adult birds.

As regards *Corvus tibetanus* (*tom.cit.* p.213), unless this is the only species we have in India, it is *not* separable from *C. corax*.

Dr. Jerdon brought down specimens from Thibet, which I have carefully compared with specimens of the Raven so common throughout the Punjab, which breeds as low down as Delhi; and though the Thibet birds were larger than some of those from the Punjab, they were smaller than others.

The Indian Raven, whether of the plains or the hills, is clearly of one species. Individuals in both localities vary a good deal in dimensions, but apparently not more so in one place than another. Whether our Indian Raven is the same as the European bird, or larger, may be decided by a reference to the following dimensions taken from a fine male directly after it was killed:—Length 24·75; expanse 52; wing 17·75; tail 10·5; wings when closed reaching to within ·25 of end of tail; tarsus 2·4; middle toe and claw 2·75; bill from forehead along curve 2·95 inches; weight 2 lbs. 8 oz. I have one or two males slightly larger, several smaller than this; the females run smaller than the males.

I think I was the first to notice that this species bred freely throughout the Punjab. They lay mostly in January, but a few pairs in December, February, and March, building large stick nests in moderate-sized trees, and laying four or five eggs, which vary from 1·72 in. to 2·25 in length, and from 1·2 to 1·37 in width, the average of seventy-two eggs measured being 1·94 by 1·31 inch.

It is by no means remarkable (*cf. loc. cit.*), I think, that *Lanius cristatus* was not observed in the valley of the Sutledge. This species is essentially a Bengal one, and is of extreme rarity, if, indeed, it ever occurs, in the plains of the north-west provinces and the Punjab. All the specimens that I have yet obtained were either from Oude, north of the Goomtee, the Rohilcund Turai, or the Dhoon, or else from the country east of Allahabad.

Westward of the slanting line I have thus indicated, *L. arenarius* replaces it, and in winter this species is abundant in the sandy plains of the Punjab beyond all its congeners.

As regards the Yellow Wagtails (*tom. cit.* p. 214) I do not think that these have as yet been correctly discriminated. We have in India six quasi-species :—(1) *Budytes flavus* (L.); (2) *B. viridis* (Gmel.); (3) *B. cinereocapillus*, Savi; (4) *B. melanocephalus*, Bp.; (5) *B. citreolus* (Pallas), and (6) *B. aureocapillus*, Vieillot. But of these I confess that I should be disposed to regard Nos. 2, 3, and 4 as different stages of the same species. I have fully discussed these various species in the rough notes on Indian ornithology which I hope to find time to print during the present year, and I will therefore here only add that *B. citreolus* (Pallas) measures—length 6 to 6·2; wing 2·86 to barely 3; bill, from front, ·45; tail about 2·75,—thus differing conspicuously in size as well as in other points from *B. aureocapillus*, Vieillot, described, by an oversight, by Dr. Jerdon (*B. Ind.* ii. p. 325) under the name of *citreolus*, of which the dimensions may be taken as—length 7·25; wing 3·2 to 3·4; bill, from front, ·55; tail about 3. The first species is common in Behar in the cold season, and has been sent me from Darjeeling in the hot weather. The latter is the Wagtail so common during the summer in Cashmere.

In regard to *Parus cinereus* (Ibis, 1869, p. 215) I would remark that I have specimens from almost all parts of the Himalayahs, from Etawah and Jhansie in the Doab, and Bundelcund, from Mount Aboo, Goonah, Ahmednugger, and the Neilgherries, all of which appear precisely similar. Whether the Singalese race be really distinct, I am not in a position to decide; but it would be curious if, while the same species extends from Murree to Darjeeling, and from Seharanpoor to Conoor, a different representative species should occur in Ceylon.

5th. The small Flamingo mentioned by Dr. Jerdon (*op. cit.* p. 231) and considered by him to be the *Phænicopterus minor* of Vieillot, is now, owing to the kindness of Major McMahon, in my museum.

The structure of the bill suffices to separate it from any other Flamingo that I have ever seen. This species is very wary. It is found in considerable numbers in the Sambhur Salt Lake, in company with myriads of the common species *P. roseus*, from which its small size and brilliant rosy hue suffice to distinguish

it at any distance. In the Nujjufgurh Jheel, south of Delhi, my friend Mr. R. Blewitt has repeatedly observed single examples.

The specimen referred to by Dr. Jerdon, which I now possess, was brought, with five others (none of which, unfortunately, were preserved), not from the neighbourhood of Delhi, but from the interior of Rajpootana, and probably from the Sambhur Lake, though the *shikarees* refused to tell me where they got them.

6th. The Wheatears which Mr. Brooks showed me (Ibis, 1869, p. 234), of which I have specimens shot at various times between the 25th September and the 5th April, are, I believe, unquestionably *Saxicola saltatrix*, Ménétr., = *S. isabellina*, Rüpp.

There has been some mistake between Mr. Brooks and myself about the *Phylloscopus* with a white wing-lining. The bird he refers to (*tom. cit.* pp. 236, 237) is the species I call *PHYLLOSCOPUS NEGLECTUS*, in regard to which I quote the following remarks from my notes :—"There is a species of *Phylloscopus* very closely allied to, but yet clearly distinct from either *P. tristis* or *P. fuscatus*. This latter has the upper surface a moderately dark dingy olive-brown, and the wing-lining and axillaries a sort of dingy buff or pale rufous. *P. tristis* has the upper parts brown, paler than *P. fuscatus* and with scarcely any olivaceous tinge, and the wing-lining and axillaries pale primrose-yellow.

"The third hitherto unnoticed species, which I call *P. neglectus*, has the upper surface a grey earthy brown (the colour of *Phyllopneuste rama*), and the wing-lining and axillaries white. In dimensions and structure (and in plumage, with the above exception) *P. neglectus* agrees closely with *P. tristis*.

"*P. neglectus* is common in the cold weather in the Punjab, and in the Doab, at least as low down as Agra; but hitherto I have seen no specimens from Central India or the lower Doab."

I have both males and females, according to the tickets of my contributors; but I have never myself ascertained the sexes. I have sometimes thought that these might be the young birds of one or the other of the two above-named species; but with several specimens before me I do not now think that this is the case.

I now venture to send you a description of what is to me a new species. It may be well known to European ornithologists;

but it is new to me. I detected it amongst a number of Himalayan birds, and owe it to the kindness of Major McMahon.

NILTAVA LEUCOTIS, sp. nov.?

Male. *Dimensions*.—Length 6; wing 3·4; tail 2·4; tarsus ·9; bill, from front, ·4 in.

Description.—The forehead, top, and back of the head glistening black; part of the lores, the cheeks, and ear-coverts pure silky white; chin and throat black, more or less glistening, and with more or less of a bluish tinge. A greyish-white half-collar on the nape, not quite extending on either side to the white ear- and cheek-patches. Back and scapulars dull black; a bright patch of glistening smalt-blue at the base of the neck on either side. Rump and upper tail-coverts bright glistening blue; shoulder of the wing, middle tail-feathers, and outer webs of lateral ones deep dull blue; inner webs of the lateral tail-feathers and wing-quills dusky brown, outer webs of quills dusky cyaneous; breast, abdomen, flanks, lower tail-coverts, and wing-lining bright ferruginous; bill apparently horny-black; legs and feet fleshy-brown.

This bird is closely allied to *N. sundara*, but differs in its somewhat smaller size, in the pure glossy black head, greyish-white half-collar, and large, conspicuous, glistening white cheek- and ear-patches. The bill is a trifle longer and the feet are decidedly feebler and smaller than those of *N. sundara*. The single specimen I possess came from the interior of the Himalayas; but the exact locality at which it was obtained is unknown to me.

I may note that the white ear- and cheek-patches, which are the most conspicuous features in this bird's plumage, closely resemble those of *Otocompsa leucotis*; but they are slightly less wide (not projecting downwards so far into the throat) and considerably longer (extending forwards under the eye to the lores).

Let me add a decidedly new species of *Prinia*:—

PRINIA HUMILIS, sp. nov.

Dimensions.—Length 4·75; expanse 5·5; tail 2·25; wing 2, when closed, reaching to within 1·38 of end of tail; bill, from front, ·4; tarsus ·76.

Description.—Head, neck, and upper back pale earthy-brown,

with an olive green shade ; scapulars, lower back, and rump rufous olivaceous-brown ; quills brown, edged with rufous brown ; tail (of twelve feathers) brown faintly rufous, obscurely rayed above—beneath, all but the two middle feathers conspicuously and narrowly tipped with white, and with a broad blackish-brown subterminal band ; lower parts silky fulvous white ; the breast shaded obscurely with dusky, and the flanks, lower abdomen, and tibial feathers distinctly tinged with pale rufous-buff. Legs and feet pale reddish brown ; bill black ; irides pale orange. A very narrow pale line from the nostrils, over the eye, almost meeting on the forehead, which line, very apparent in the freshly killed bird, is hardly traceable in badly preserved skins.

The bill in this species is really much smaller and feebler than that of *P. socialis*, *P. flaviventris*, *P. stewarti*, or *P. gracilis*, and is about the same size as that of *P. hodgsoni*.

This species differs conspicuously from *P. gracilis* in the concolorous back and head and the generally paler and greener tint of the upper parts. I at one time fancied that this might be Dr. Jerdon's *P. adamsi* (B. Ind. ii. p. 170) ; but that has *ten*, while this has always *twelve* tail-feathers.

These little birds are common (climbing and flitting about restlessly in low scrub jungle) throughout the North-west Provinces and the Punjab, in suitable localities. I have never found them in fields or gardens, but always amongst scattered stunted bushes or waste places. The stomachs of all I examined contained tiny ants and almost microscopical beetles.

Yours faithfully,

ALLAN HUME.

Simlah, July 12, 1869.

SIR,—Little, if anything, has hitherto been known of the breeding of the Indian Blackwinged Stilt, *Himantopus candidus**.

High and low I have sought for the eggs of this species without success ; the birds always left the localities in which I had ob-

* Be it understood that I do not of my own authority assert that the Indian race is distinct from the European. Mr. Blyth considered that it was ; and as I have not yet compared the birds, I follow him, until I have opportunities of judging for myself.

served them during the cold season early in May, and I had come to the conclusion that they did not breed with us.

Fancy therefore my delight at finding the other day that they bred in hundreds at the Sooltanpoor salt-works, which are situated in the Goorgaon district, some five and thirty miles south of Delhi.

The birds are seen in small numbers throughout the year, but congregate in great numbers early in May about the works, which consist of brine-wells and many hundred acres of shallow rectangular evaporating-pans, from one to two hundred feet square, and from six to ten inches deep. These pans are merely depressions dug in the soil and lined with *chunam* or fine lime, obtained by burning *kunker*, a nodular concretionary limestone, found in beds near the surface, more or less throughout the plains of upper India. Small strips of ground from one to five or six feet broad, divide the pans; and on the margins of these, or even in the beds of disused pans, where only a little brine ever stands, the Stilts build their nests.

They collect together small pieces of *kunker*, or the broken lime lining of the pans, into a circular platform, from five to seven inches in diameter, and from two to three inches in height; on this again they place a little dry grass, on which they lay usually lay four eggs, but not unfrequently only two or three. They begin to lay towards the end of May; and by the beginning of July numbers of young are to be seen about, and most of the eggs that remain are hard set. The majority of the birds lay during the second week in June.

The temperature of the nests at this time, in the full sun, was probably quite 140°.

The eggs, though slightly smaller, are almost exactly similar to those of the European Stilt figured by Mr. Hewitson; only, as a body, the ground-colour is slightly dingier and less bright than in his figures.

The merit of this discovery belongs to Baboo Kalee Naraiju, one of my officers, who is in charge of these works, and, during the cold season, assured me that this species did breed amongst the salt-pans. He also noticed (and he is perfectly correct) that the eggs, though greatly resembling those of the Red-wattled

Plover (*Lobivanellus goensis*), which breeds there abundantly, can be distinguished from them by :—1st, the nest, the Plover never making any; 2nd, the size, which is slightly smaller, and the shape, which is more attenuated at one end; and, 3rd, by the markings, which are less numerous and more clearly defined. I may add that the eggs of the Stilt, of which we collected nearly one hundred, appear to want entirely those faint inky purple secondary markings so conspicuous in the eggs of most of our Indian Plovers and Terns.

Yours, &c.,

ALLAN HUME.

Shillong, 24th October, 1869.

SIR,—Among other interesting specimens seen by me in Upper Assam was a living specimen of a *Cerionis* which I believe to be *C. temmincki*. It is found in the hill-ranges towards the head of the valley, descending (it is asserted) occasionally to a rather low level. It is called “*Sún-súria*” by the natives, which means the “Golden bird.” The specimen subsequently died, and I obtained the skin, which I will describe in a short paper I am preparing on some of the birds of Assam for your journal; but I wish to send this note off at once.

Another still more interesting species, brought alive from the Mishmi hills, is a species of Monaul or *Lophophorus*. When I first saw it, it was in such wretched plumage that, although I considered it to be distinct from the Himalayan species, I was unable to describe it. It is now here at Shillong, on the Khasia hills, alive and in good health, though not in my possession, and, as it has very recently assumed its tail-feathers, I am able to pronounce it decidedly to be distinct from *L. impeyanus*. I have not seen the description of *L. lhuysi*, lately discovered in Northern China, and therefore I cannot speak positively as to its distinctness from that bird; but I will give a brief description of it, which will enable you to say whether it be *L. lhuysi* or no. The crest in this example is entirely wanting; but the feathers of the head are much abraded and the skin injured. The whole upper surface of the head, neck, upper part of the back, and wings is glossy blue-green, wanting (at present) the rich golden and pale green feathers of the hind neck of *L. im-*

peyanus; but a few golden feathers are appearing on the back and sides of the head: the lower back is *greyish-white*, each feather with a *dark central streak*: upper tail-coverts very long and *pure white*: tail reddish-brown (quite different from the rufous-cinnamon of *L. impeyanus*), with a broadish creamy-white tip: lower parts and quills black, the former somewhat glossy: nude skin of the face of great extent and cobalt-blue: bill and legs horny yellow: in size somewhat larger than *L. impeyanus*.

Should this prove to be an undescribed species, I would propose for it the name of *LOPHOPHORUS SCLATERI*, after your predecessor in the editorship of 'The Ibis,' who has done so much towards elucidating the Pheasant-family.

I am, &c.,

T. C. JERDON,

Retired Deputy Inspector-General of Hospitals.

. [We think there can be no question of the bird above described being quite distinct from *L. lhuysi* (the habitat of which, we may mention, appears to be Tibet* and not Northern China, as was at first supposed), since that species has the tail of a green bronze; and as no person can speak more authoritatively on the subject of its distinctness from *L. impeyanus* than Dr. Jerdon, there can be little doubt that *L. sclateri* is a well-marked and good species.—ED.]

Helsingfors, October 29, 1869.

SIR,—It may interest you to know that *Lusciniopsis fluviatilis* (Wolf) occurs in the south-eastern part of Finland. Some weeks ago I obtained a specimen of that bird, killed by my friend Dr. L. M. Runeberg, near Borgå, about twenty English miles to the east of Helsingfors, on the 24th of June last. As you know, this species has never before been recorded from Finland or from Scandinavia. Magnus von Wright mentions in his 'Finlands Foglar' (i. p. 140, note) that he had heard at Kyrkslätt and Uskela, near Åbo, some Warblers singing, which he believed to be *Sylvia locustella*. These I imagine must have been *Lusciniopsis fluviatilis*.

* *Fide* Sclater, P. Z. S. 1868, p. 1.

At least three examples of *Erythropus vespertinus* (L.), all old birds, have been obtained during the past summer at Uleåborg and Kajana, lat. 65° and $64^{\circ}5$ N., and several others observed. I believe this species to be a real yet rare inhabitant of Finland. All the specimens procured belong to the true *E. vespertinus*, and not to the *E. amurensis* (Radde) of Gurney (Ibis, 1868, p. 4).

I possess a specimen of *Calamodyta schænobæus* (L.) (*Sylvia phragmitis*, Bechst.) obtained at Uleåborg at the end of July last by Mr. Dahlström. Wilhelm von Wright observed this species at Karesuando, lat. $68^{\circ}5$ N., and Lilljeborg at Tromsø in West Finmark.

I should be obliged by your publishing these notes in the next number of 'The Ibis,' and remain, Sir,

Yours, &c.,

A. J. MALMGREN*.

London, Nov. 15, 1869.

SIR,—I visited Egypt at the beginning of this year, and with my brother made a voyage on the Nile from Cairo to Assouan and back. The trip lasted from the 27th of January till the 10th of April, during which period we made a few notes and collected some specimens, which, from this locality, I believe are new to most ornithologists. On the present occasion I must confine my remarks to *Elanus cæruleus* (Desf.)—*Falco melanopterus*, Daud.

This sociable pretty little Hawk is too well known to require much to be said upon the bird itself. It lives upon insects and mice, and I never observed any other food in the crops of four specimens which I examined. The flight is rather peculiar and varied; at Girgeh, where I first saw a pair playing together, they looked very like the Common Gull. The shortness of the tail detracts, to my mind, much from the elegance of the bird's flight, and gives it an Owl-like appearance, which is somewhat strengthened by the hour at which I saw it on the wing, sometimes hovering over the water late in the evening while I have been watching for Ducks. The irides of this species are exactly the

* [Cf. *suprà*, p. 132.—ED.]

colour of red currants—a fact overlooked by some authors and most taxidermists. We sought carefully for the nest of *Elanus cæruleus*, having often met with the birds in pairs remaining the whole day in certain rows of mimosa-trees which they would not leave; and at length we were rewarded; for on the 28th of March, having seen a bird flying along a row of these trees, we walked up to the spot and presently heard the cry of its mate, which we thus discovered sitting on its nest, placed at the top of a young mimosa about twenty feet from the ground. The nest contained four eggs about the size of a Kestrel's and varying considerably in colour, some being as dark as Kestrels' while others show much of the white ground between the blotches. While we were blowing the eggs under the tree, the bird returned and sat in the nest, repeating the cry which had at first called our attention to it.

On the 30th of March, at Boosh, we found another nest of this bird, situated on the end of a bough at the top of a high mimosa. Owing to the difficulty in reaching it, we unfortunately broke the four eggs it contained. They were hard sat-on, but in colour exactly resembled the nestful we brought back from Egypt.

I am, &c.,

ERNEST SHELLEY.

6th December, 1869.

SIR,—In his 'Birds of South Africa' Mr. Layard identifies the small white-winged Heron of India, *Ardea grayi*, Sykes, with his "no. 586," *A. leucoptera*, Bodd. I have not seen the South-African specimens mentioned by Mr. Layard, but I have recently had the opportunity of examining a small Heron of this group obtained on the Zambesi by Dr. Kirk, and now preserved in the Leyden Museum. Mr. Blyth, who happened to be with me at the time, was so good as to assist me in comparing this specimen with the large series of allied Herons, in which the Leyden collection is exceptionally rich, and we both came to the conclusion that the Zambesi specimen is distinct from the Indian bird, and is identical with the nearly allied but somewhat larger species of Madagascar, *A. idæ*, Hartl. As this identification seems to be an interesting one, I am desirous of putting it on record—es-

pecially as it seems most probable that the species occurring in South Africa would be that found on the Zambesi.

With reference to the opinion formed by Mr. Tristram and myself (*Ibis*, 1869, pp. 437, 438) as to the probable identity of *Butorides atricapilla* (Afzel.) and *B. javanica* (Horsf.), I had also an opportunity of examining at Leyden a considerable series of these two species, and I found that they bore out the distinction mentioned by Prof. Schlegel (*Mus. P.-B. Ardeæ*, p. 43), who, speaking of the latter, says that it is very like the former, "mais d'une taille un peu moins forte, et le devant du cou d'un blanc lavé souvent d'une teinte fauve, mais sans raie rousse." Mr. Tristram has, at my request, reexamined the specimens at Greatham, with a special reference to the "raie rousse," which he informs me he finds to be present in his examples of *B. atricapilla*, but absent in all those of *B. javanica* except in one "summer Chinese specimen which has a *fulvous* line very hard upon rufous." On the whole he is now disposed to agree with me in considering that these two very nearly related forms are rightly treated in the Leyden Museum as specifically distinct, though the difference is certainly very slight.

I may perhaps be allowed to take this opportunity of offering my very best thanks to Prof. Schlegel for the very great kindness and liberality with which, during a four days' visit to the Leyden Museum, he allowed me the full advantage of examining the vast ornithological treasures of that noble collection, and also gave me the valuable aid of his own great experience on many points of ornithological interest respecting which I was desirous of obtaining information.

I am, yours &c.,

J. H. GURNEY.

SIR,—When examining the Wading-birds in the collection of the late Mr. C. J. Andersson, I found a single specimen of *Tringa bairdi*, Coues, labelled "*Tringa* ? sp., male; Walvisch Bay, 24th Oct. 1863." The occurrence in South-west Africa of a little Sandpiper which has hitherto been regarded as restricted to America appears to me of sufficient interest to deserve a record.

The case, it is true, is not without a sort of parallel, at least as regards the *Limicola*; for *Tringa canutus*, *T. subarquata*, and *Calidris arenaria* are found alike in North America and in South Africa; but these three species are all found also in Europe, and might travel from the most northern parts of our continent to the Cape of Good Hope with comparative ease by stages which would admit of rest and food on the way. *T. bairdi*, however, so far as I am aware, has not been recognized in Europe; we may therefore presume that the example procured as above by Mr. Andersson accomplished the entire journey from South America to Walvisch Bay by water—a fact which, considering the distance, seems truly marvellous.

This statement would naturally suggest to the mind of the sceptical a probable mistake in the determination of the specimen; I was therefore unwilling to speak positively on the subject until I had made a careful comparison of it with authentic examples from the New World. The result of my examination has shown me that in point of measurement, form, and relative proportion of bill, feet, and tarsi, as well as in coloration, it differs in no material respect from specimens of *T. bairdi* obtained in the United States and Mexico.

I am, Sir, &c.,

J. EDMUND HARTING.

16th Dec. 1869.

SIR,—I have recently received from Prof. Sundevall a letter containing some remarks on my paper on the genus *Acredula* (*Ibis*, 1868, pp. 295–302); and he informs me that, when adult, the female of *A. caudata* has the head white like the male. I think, therefore, that the most sceptical will not refuse specific rank to the Long-tailed Titmouse of our island, *A. rosea* (Blyth), as compared with the Scandinavian bird. The distinction between the two species must not, however, be considered (as I set forth in my paper) to depend mainly on the statement which Prof. Sundevall has shown to be incorrect, but on the permanent differences when adult, the British bird having a broad black bar from the eye joining the black of the nape, while the whole head of the Scandinavian bird is pure white. I must do Mr. Keulemans the justice of saying that shortly after the publica-

tion of my paper he informed me that the female *A. caudata* obtained a white head when adult, and that he arrived at this conclusion from the dissection of a specimen shot by himself near Leyden, which he forwarded to me. I was then inclined to doubt the truth of the observation; but its correctness is now proved.

Prof. Sundevall further tells me that *Saxicola modesta*, Tristram (Ibis, 1869, p. 206), is identical with *Erithacus schlegeli*, as suggested by Mr. Tristram (*loc. cit.* note) to be possibly the case.

I am, &c.,

11 Hanover Square, London.

R. B. SHARPE.

SIR,—I wish to make a few remarks on that part of Mr. Howard Saunders's paper (Ibis, 1869, pp. 391–397) which relates to Italian ornithology.

Mr. Saunders says (*tom. cit.* p. 396) that *Larus atricilla* is “a regular visitant in winter” in the neighbourhood of Palermo. During a recent visit to Sicily I had the opportunity of examining the specimens which he thought belonged to that species, and I found them to be examples of *L. melanocephalus*, young and in winter dress. If Mr. Saunders had been able to compare them with examples of *L. atricilla*, he would have immediately perceived the difference. I doubt much whether *L. gelastes* is so common on the coasts of Italy as Mr. Saunders says; but certainly the two specimens in the Museum of Palermo determined as belonging to that species are nothing else than examples of *L. ridibundus* in winter dress.

As to the two specimens of *Glaucidium passerinum* said (*loc. cit.*) to exist in the Museum of Catania, I can positively affirm that they are *G. pumilum* from South America, and were most probably from collections sent by members of the imperial family of Brazil to their relatives of the royal family of Naples. I do not remember having seen the *Hirundo cahirica* in the same Museum, and I cannot understand the doubts expressed by Mr. Saunders as to the existence of *Francolinus vulgaris* in Sicily; for specimens of it have recently been received by Prof. Doderlein from Terranova which are actually in the Museum at Palermo.

And now, turning to the Continent, I should wish to have the specimen of *Bubo ascalaphus* mentioned by Mr. Saunders (*tom.*

cit. p. 395) compared with *B. maximus*, to prove that the former has good claim to be included among Italian birds. Concerning the Red Partridges seen in the market of Florence, there is no doubt that they come from Sardinia. Every mail-steamer from that island brings numbers of them to the markets of Naples, Palermo, Leghorn, Genoa, Turin, and elsewhere; I know that many are even sent to Marseilles.

I should like, before concluding, to bring forward the fact that another eastern visitor has made its appearance in Italy for the first time. On a late visit to the Museum at Pisa, Prof. Savi showed me three specimens of *Terekia cinerea* caught all together near that city on the 9th of May last. One of them is now in the Museum of Turin.

I conclude with a remark on exotic ornithology. I should wish to call Mr. Tristram's attention to the possibility of his *Megalophonus anderssoni* being the same as my *M. rufocinnamomeus* from Abyssinia (*Atti Soc. Ital. Sc. Nat.* 1866). Mr. Heuglin has supposed that it may be the same as his *Geocoraphus elegantissimus* (*J. f. O.* 1868, p. 228); but Dr. Finsch, who has lately inspected it, recognizes it as a true *Megalophonus* and quite distinct from any other species previously described.

I remain, Sir, &c.,

Zoological Museum, Turin,
26th December, 1869.

TOMMASO SALVADORI.

London, 28th December, 1869.

SIR,—M. le Père Armand David, of Peking, sent me the enclosed description of a *Parus* which occurs in the neighbourhood of the Chinese capital, together with two examples of the bird itself, and begged me to have his diagnosis inserted in 'The Ibis,' provided that the species turned out a novelty, as he supposed it would. At first glance I pronounced it to be *P. ater*, but on closer examination I find it to have a few of the black crown-feathers lengthened and protruding over the occipital white. By this it can be at once distinguished from the European *P. ater*, L. A similar form, hitherto identified with that species, has been brought from Hakodadi (North Japan). I have examined two specimens of this, and notice that the crest-feathers

are shorter and not very marked. It holds an intermediate position between the European and Pekin birds, but it should perhaps with propriety be associated with the Pekin species. Mr. Blyth considered our present bird referable to the *P. æmodius*, Hodgson, of the Himalayas. Fortunately the British Museum possesses a skin of this, and I had an opportunity of comparison. *P. æmodius* is altogether a smaller and more delicate bird, with a much smaller bill and longer and better-developed crest.

“**PARUS PEKINENSIS.**

“*Proportions.*—Longueur totale, onze centimètres; les ailes pliées vont jusqu’au tiers de la queue, laquelle mesure 4 centimètres.

“Le bec, conique et médiocrement robuste, a six millimètres de long; les tarses quinze; le pouce treize; l’ongle du pouce six millimètres et demi; le doigt médian a douze millimètres et demi.

“*Couleurs.*—Bec noir, plus clair au bout; tarses et doigts bleuâtres ou plombés, de même que les ongles. Iris d’un brun noirâtre.

“*Tête*, ainsi que les côtés du haut du cou, d’un noir lustré, avec trois des quatre plumes allongées de la même couleur, que l’oiseau tient habituellement dressées en forme de huppe. Gorge et bas du cou d’un noir moins pur, qui descend plus bas vers le côtés de la poitrine qu’au milieu. Une tache isolée d’un blanc pur derrière la tête, au haut du cou; joues et côtés du cou de la même couleur. Dos cendré ainsi que les sus-caudales; croupion, côtés et bas de l’abdomen d’un gris plus ou moins olivâtre; bas de la poitrine, milieu du ventre et sous-caudales d’un gris blanchâtre. Pennes caudales d’un brun-grisâtre; pennes alaires d’un brun tirant plus à l’olivâtre et légèrement liserées de gris. Petites couvertures des ailes terminées de blanc et formant deux petites bandes de cette couleur.

“*Historique.*—Cette petite Mésange huppée ne paraît point connue de nos Chinois, qui la confondent avec le *Parus kamtschatskensis* (variété du *P. palustris*). Elle est d’ailleurs peu répandue dans le pays, et je ne l’ai vue à Pékin qu’une

seule fois en cinq ans et demi ; c'est en Janvier 1864. En Décembre 1867, ayant eu occasion d'aller passer quelques jours dans le voisinage des sépultures impériales de Che-san-lin, j'y ai retrouvé ma Mésange huppée parcourant en petites bandes les pins et les thuias, dont elle aime les fruits oléagineux, en compagnie des *Parus minor* et *P. kamtchatkensis*. C'est un oiseau peu gai et plus silencieux que ses congénères ; il semble ne pas connaître le danger, et il est si peu méfiant que quatre individus que je rencontrai occupés à butiner ensemble dans les branches clair-semées d'une pin antique, se sont laissés tirés l'un après l'autre et tuer tous sans chercher à fuir. Bien plus, deux ou trois autres de ces pauvres oiseaux, atteints de plomb trop petit pour les tuer sur le coup, n'ont fait que s'écarter un peu de leur place, à chaque coup de fusil qu'on leur a tiré, jusqu'à ce qu'ils aient été abattus."

Mr. G. R. Gray agrees with me in considering *Parus pekinensis* a very distinct thing. I have therefore no hesitation in forwarding to you for publication my friend Père David's description as that of a good and interesting species belonging to the Coal-Titmouse group.

I am, Sir, yours truly,

ROBERT SWINHOE.

We have great pleasure in announcing the intended publication by Messrs. C. H. T. and G. F. L. Marshall of a monograph of the *Capitonidæ*, which will form a companion work to Mr. Sharpe's '*Alcedinidæ*,' and could not be on a better plan. Those ornithologists who have hitherto failed to appreciate fully the difference between the families *Capitonidæ* and *Bucconidæ* will now perhaps be helped to more correct ideas on the subject.

Though we have succeeded in clearing off a good part of our arrears in the 'Notices of Recent Ornithological Publications,' much yet remains to be disposed of ; but our next number, we hope, will enable us once more to get abreast of the literature of the day, notwithstanding its active state.